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INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE
RUEHGO/AMEMBASSY RANGOON 0003
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 0021
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RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BRATISLAVA 000256

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STATE FOR DRL/IRF, NEA/ARPI, AND EAP/MLS
NSC FOR DAMON WILSON

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [UNSC](#) [KIRF](#) [IZ](#) [UP](#) [BO](#) [BM](#) [LO](#)
SUBJECT: SLOVAKIA POLITICAL ROUNDUP, MARCH 31, 2006

REF: A. BRATISLAVA 214

[1](#)B. 05 BRATISLAVA 979
[1](#)C. 05 BRATISLAVA 1010

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Classified By: Ambassador Rodolphe M. Vallee for Reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

DZURINDA SPEAKS WITH MILINKEVICH, INVITES HIM TO VISIT

[1](#)1. (C) Prime Minister Mikulas Dzurinda called Belarusian opposition leader Aleksandr Milinkevich March 24 to express his support and to convey Slovakia's offer to allow any Belarusian students expelled from state universities for political reasons to continue their studies at Slovak schools. Milinkevich told Dzurinda that he was very appreciative of GOS support. Dzurinda also invited Milinkevich to visit Slovakia, and his staff tells us that they expect the visit to take place in late April.

UKRAINIANS LEFT IN THE DARK ABOUT SLOVAK PRINTING PRESS

[1](#)2. (C) MFA State Secretary (Deputy Minister) Jozef Berenyi told DCM March 24 that the Slovak government has already sent a printing press to western Ukraine for the use of the Belarusian opposition (refs B, C), and further believes that the opposition will eventually be able to smuggle the press into Belarus. Interestingly, the Slovak government purposefully did not inform Ukrainian government about the press, which was brought in as a "gift to the Rotary Club," because of concerns that the Ukrainians would stop the shipment if given advance notice. The MFA discussed whether to inform the GOU after the fact, especially on the eve of Ukrainian Foreign Minister Tarasyuk's visit to Bratislava earlier this month. However, given the proximity of Ukrainian elections, the GOS opted not to tell Tarasyuk and to "wait and see" who would become FM in a new Ukrainian government.

SMK WOULD JOIN SMER IN COALITION; IFFY ON HZDS

[1](#)3. (C) Berenyi also told us that on the domestic political scene, SMK -- which acknowledges that it is the "girl in the corner waiting to be asked to dance" when it comes to Slovak politics -- would not refuse an offer to join a coalition with parties other than the Communist Party (KSS), the

nationalist party SNS, and "probably HZDS." When asked about SMK Chairman Bela Bugar's recent comments that Smer policies "would ruin the country," Berenyi said that the remarks were simply "political rhetoric" and that SMK would join a Smer-led coalition if Fico had enough votes. Personally, however, Berenyi said he predicts that Smer will get fewer votes than the polls indicate, and SDKU more. COMMENT: SMK's willingness to join Smer is tempered by the close personal relationship between Bugar and Dzurinda, which was very obvious to Ambassador on the PM's visit to Washington earlier this month -- particularly during the high profile gift-giving moment Dzurinda allowed Bugar to have in the oval office. END COMMENT.

MINISTER OF CULTURE GETS THE BOOT

14. (U) Minister of Culture Frantisek Toth, a former ANO member who has recently founded a new political party "Hope," was recalled by the President at the request of Prime Minister Dzurinda. Toth sent "thank you letters" to all of Slovakia's teachers at a cost of SKK 700,000 (around USD 23,000), in a move many claimed was a blatant misuse of state funds for an election campaign. Toth had been embattled in recent months because of his efforts to sell a historic theater building, and for his use of a new theater before its official opening. Toth narrowly escaped a recall vote in parliament on February 24. Toth will be replaced by former Minister Rudolf Chmel until elections.

IRAQI CIVIL SOCIETY LEADERS LEARN GOOD GOVERNANCE

15. (SBU) The most recent group of Iraqi civil society leaders to visit Bratislava for two weeks of training sponsored by the International Republican Institute (IRI) and Slovakia's Pontis Foundation visited parliament, participated in training with NGOs and watchdog groups. The Iraqis told

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us that they consider the Slovaks to be credible role models with valid and valuable lessons to share, because of Slovakia's own transition from an autocratic state to a viable democracy with a thriving civil society.

16. (C) The Iraqis were committed to their work building Iraqi society, but were less enthusiastic about domestic events back home. According to one Slovak trainer, this group of Iraqi visitors was "more pessimistic" than previous groups. At a reception hosted by the Ambassador March 20, the civil society leaders said that things on the ground in Baghdad are worse than portrayed in the media. They told us that increasing crime and sectarian violence have driven many of them to dismiss their employees early so they can travel home before dark.

BURMESE PM IN EXILE VISITS BRATISLAVA

17. (SBU) Burmese Prime Minister in Exile Sein Win and representative for UN Affairs Thang Htun visited Bratislava March 22-23 to consult with MFA State Secretary (Deputy Foreign Minister) Magda Vasaryova regarding possible UNSC action against the military government in Burma. Win said that the Burmese government in exile is traveling to all UNSC capitals in an effort to secure the 9 votes needed to bring the issue before the Council as a "threat to international peace and security." When asked about China's relationship with the current regime, Win and Htun told Slovak opinion leaders that China has sent signals that it is concerned simply with regional stability, and that it would not "stick up" for the current regime. In fact, they said that China has been speaking "roughly" behind closed doors with the current regime in Rangoon.

LOCAL BAHAI COMMUNITY PRESSES GOS FOR ACTION IN IRAN

18. (C) Local Baha'i leaders are planning to approach the GOS to thank the government for its previous support of Baha'i issues in the UN, and to express concern about -- and possibly shore-up support against -- the increase in hostile activity by the Ahmadinejad regime against the religion, which claims 300,000 members in Iran. Local Baha'i are distributing statements from the UN Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Religion or Belief regarding Iran's clandestine campaign to secretly register and monitor all Baha'i within its border, which they are worried could be a prelude to genocide. Baha'i officials will be asking European capitals to consider diplomatic action to protect Iranian Baha'i.

VALLEE